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Middle English Dialectology by a Machine-readable Corpus:  
With Special Reference to *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*\*

ENDO Hiroaki\*\*

中英語期から残存している手書きの資料の中には書簡のように必ず自筆で書かれた個人的文書もあり、正書法が無い時代のそれらの綴字を調べて発音癖をある程度まで推論することができるものの、発音を直接指示することはできず、参考資料となるにとどまる。一方、散文の文学作品の場合は写字生が転写する際に自分の方言形を入れて改変している場合が多く、写本の言語は常に原作者と写字生たちの方言の混成言語（Mischsprache）となっており、原作の手稿が消失している中英語テキストではその綴字を入れたのが誰かを特定することができない。信頼しうる方法として、韻文中の脚韻ペアを調査し、改変されにくい脚韻語の語源形比較を通して音韻変化を追跡し、原作者が知る中英語音素体系を再構築することが従来より行われてきた。また、個人的文書の調査結果から綴字傾向の地理的分布が判明しており、それを参照しつつ原作の方言地域を特定することも可能である。

中英語読解、語源形特定には時間がかかり、また調査活動の一部しか出版できないため、他の研究者が後からその結果を全て知るには再度調査を行う必要があるなど、中英語音韻・方言研究者はこれまで非能率的な作業を強いられてきた。調査情報共有のため全中英語脚韻を対象としたデータベースが望まれており、執筆者はこれらの問題に対する一つの回答として、脚韻詩を機械可読化テキスト化し、脚韻語に語源音素記号を付けた電子コーパスを編纂、活用してきた。

本論考では13世紀末に作成された脚韻詩 *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*（4620行）の電子コーパスを検索した結果をもとに分析を行っている。このロマンスの刊本を19世紀末に編集した Kölbing は、その原作の方言地域を英国南西部の Southampton と特定し、その判断が英文学史の参考書にもそのまま掲載されてきた。しかし本執筆者が語源音素を指定して脚韻を検索・調査したところ、英国南西部からかなり離れた北部、中西部、東部の諸方言を示す5つの音韻特徴が検出された。これらの方言特徴は編集者が重視していなかったものである。

\*機械可読化コーパスによる中英語方言研究－*Sir Beues of Hamtoun*を中心に－

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編集時の 19 世紀末から現代までに出版された数々の英語音韻史の参考書や方言資料を参照しつつ、執筆者は原作者の方言について例証、再考察した。原作者は中部方言地域に存在していた可能性が結論で提示される。

## 1. Introduction: The Use of Rhymes in Middle English *Mischsprachen*

In the Middle English period (approximately between the 12th and 15th centuries), when printing shops were not available, all books were manually reproduced. Since there was not a firm standard orthography to follow, the scribes in charge, who had various dialectal background, freely altered texts in spelling, word order, and sometimes plot itself (Sisam 1921: 265-6). After such modifications, manuscripts circulated usually in differing forms even if they derived from a single source.

It was not at all rare that copies were recycled as exemplars for the next generation of copies. As a consequence, the dialectal features of the scribes were multiply installed in the third and fourth generations, in which we observe admixtures of diverse dialectal forms or *Mischsprachen* (McIntosh *et al.* 1986: 9-10).

Personal documents, such as diaries and wills, are, on the one hand, almost always autographic, where lack of orthography in their background enables us to describe at least part of the writers' language; autographic manuscripts of *literature* are, on the other hand, most often missing. In the latter case it is next to impossible to distill linguistic characteristics of the author (and of the participating scribes) from those contaminated products. Hence, Burrow and Turville-Petre are only halfway correct in their claim (1992: 9): "Although the scribes who copied our texts wrote Middle English in a variety of differing forms, their spelling generally keeps closer to the sounds of words than does that of Modern English".

Thus, phonological studies do not make much sense if the researchers analyse prose literary materials, since spellings in the manuscripts (the only clue to his/her phonology therein) have been invented in such an arbitrary manner. In contrast, verse texts are much more promising, especially when they are rhymed poems. Scribes could seldom change words in rhyming positions (Skeat 1915: xxviii). Such words may not be replaced with *only semantically* similar words, nor can they be supplanted with *merely phonologically* similar ones; otherwise, people who read the counterfeit products would immediately notice explicit corruption either of the rhymes or of the story. Thence, in mediaeval written materials, lexical items in rhymes may present the most

secure clues as they are authenticated as the author's own selection. Now, how can a researcher study ME *phonology* with them?

While analysing such verse texts (usually in editions compiled from variedly copied manuscripts), the researcher checks up the meanings and etymological forms of rhyme words by dictionaries of etymology, of Old English, of Old French, etc. By comparison of the etymological forms of those which are rhyming together, he/she is able to learn the fact that the words that had once held different Nucleus vowels and/or Coda consonants eventually fell together in the ME period into the same sequence of phonemes. This method is effective in grasping ME phonological shifts while staying away from considering the *mischsprachlichen* spellings of rhyme words. Here is a stanza quoted from *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* ll.3841-2 (Kölbing 1885-94):

Saber at Hamtoun lai in is bed,	(< OE <i>bedd</i> )
Him thou <sup>3</sup> te, Beues a wonde hed;	(< OE <i>hæfde</i> )

[Saber stayed in his BED in Hampton, / It seemed to him Bevis HAD a wound;]

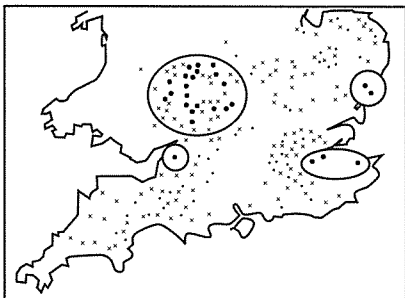


Figure1: *hed* for HED: a dot map

Present-day RP has /æ/ in HAD (< ME /a/), which does not rhyme with BED, while in ME there appear to have been some regional dialects that had a variant pronunciation /hed/. Provided that the vocalic feature is found confined only to a limited number of regions, the student is able to realise the candidate areas where the shift took place. Figure 1 is a dot map for the characteristic in question

(processed after McIntosh *et al.* 1986: 528 [No.1012]) which is based on spelling information in mass of autographic personal documents. Following similar steps for other rhyme groups too, not only can we detect phonological changes by consulting the pre-ME forms, but also can prove the phonological value of the alphabetical representation and specify the locality of the author's dialect to a considerable extent.

Before discussing the ME material, the reader would accept a working hypothesis: *all the rhymes should be phonemically exact in the writer's dialect*. It is often claimed that there are problematic rhymes which are supposed to be inexact according to the

normal history of English phonology. There are, on the other hand, scholars who maintain that all the ME rhymes should be assumed to be accurate. The present author supports the latter opinion for the following three reasons:

- 1) When mass production of copies was not possible, literature in manuscripts was mainly recited and accordingly shared by people. This tradition must compel the writers to respect rhymes and metre substantially (Dobson 1968: § 108 n2).
- 2) ME is not a unified organ of language, but consists of several dialectal units living in parallel. The absence of standardised English enabled poets to utilise various types of pronunciation at rhymes (Ikegami 1984: viii-xiii<sup>1)</sup>), as far as their assumed listeners managed to recognise the forms. Therefore, those peculiar rhymes may actually be perfect ones in their acknowledged dialect/s.
- 3) Needless to say, no audible record exists of the mediaeval language, and rhyme analysis is, so to speak, the best and last resort for learning about ME phonology. Those who insist on the occasional invalidity of rhymes do themselves discuss on the premiss of the data that have been collected from ME rhymes. Their treatment of this issue is thus rather tautological.

## 2. Data Retrieval Stratagems with an Electronic Corpus

As has been mentioned in Section 1, ME phonologists have long been collecting rhymes that represent phonological shift/s unambiguously. This traditional method has no problems by itself in the accuracy point of view. Yet, reading long ME texts, consulting various dictionaries, and making up lists of a considerable number of rhymes, the scholars are obliged to spend tremendous time and energy, and what makes the matter worse, the whole records of their investigation are not necessarily available to others, as their published achievements are normally only part of their entire research.

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<sup>1)</sup> Ikegami (1984: xiii) admits there could be inexact rhymes, taking up examples that indeed appear dubious. Nevertheless, they may actually show us some unknown variants of ME pronunciation. For instance, she regards Chaucer's rhyme *on* : *goon* (< OE *on* [prep.] : OE *gān* [pp.]) as inexact; it may, however, possibly reflect an ME variant of OE *ā* (or OE *o*) which develops into the one used in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* 2.1.1-3 (Clark and Wright 1949; Kökeritz 1953: 132):

*Speed* : Sir, your glove.

*Valentine* : Not mine; my gloves are on. (< OE *on* ON)

*Speed* : Why, then, this may be yours, for this is but one. (< OE *ān* ONE)

Note that it cannot be promptly judged whether the reflected phonetic value is based on long [ɔ:] (ME *lonl* > /ɔzn/ under stress) or short [o] (ME /ɔz/ > /o/ in a closed syllable). The reader could consult Dobson (1968: § 145) for further information on these "equivalents".

processes. The second problem is especially severe, and some complete database of ME rhymes has been a desideratum (Dobson 1968: § 108 n2).

In consideration about these matters, a tagged corpus has been constructed, aimed at helping rhyme analysts (1) to search texts for words that have a certain (stem) vowel in their etymology (e.g., OE *y*) within a reasonable range of time, and (2) to share and maintain etymological information about rhyme words in easy-to-handle electronic files. Presently the structure and annotating principles of the corpus have been premised on searching with GNU AWK, though it would easily be rearranged with other text-filtering tools.

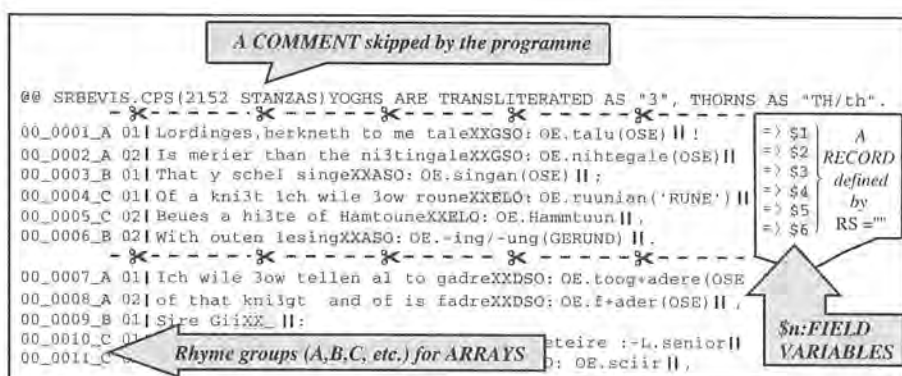


Figure 2: Middle English *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* in the Tagged Electronic Corpus<sup>2)</sup>

Firstly, to obtain the electronic “plain” text of *Beues* the edition was thoroughly typewritten into electronic files twice by the present author, and the two files were compared electronically by a DIFF programme to remove errors.<sup>3)</sup>

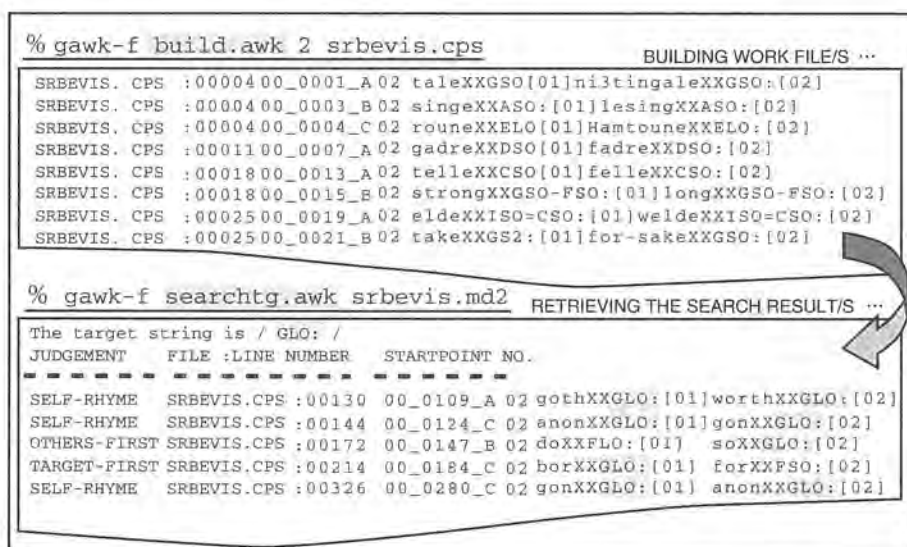
In order to have the retrieval programmes recognise the rhyme words, firstly they are tagged with “XX” in common (that is, character strings that contain “XX” are the search targets). Since a machine cannot read ME texts nor consult dictionaries, one who has the skill should do the work and encode the etymological vocalic value/s into predefined symbols, affixing them to the markers. Strictly, the search target is therefore not the character string of rhyme words like “**tale**” (the spelling is not worth considera-

<sup>29</sup> Currently 94% of the whole text is tagged with etymological symbols; the slots left so far (4%) still remains unfilled mostly because of their unknown etymologies.

<sup>4</sup>) Electronic texts of *Beves* are now accessible on the Internet site "TEAMS Middle English Texts" (maintained by A. Lupack *et al.*). This information is kindly contributed by one of the anonymous referees: <http://128.151.244.128/camelot/teams/bevis.htm> (.../tmsmenu.htm for the menu)

tion) but the symbols like “XXGS0:” (shadowed in Figure 2). Colons and semicolons, which indicate OE/ON-originated words and ME loans (from Old French, Middle Dutch, etc.) respectively, are appended so as to limit the output to a preset range (e.g., only the rhymes which contain OE/ON descendants).

As in Figure 3, following the routines in the first script (**BUILD.AWK**), GAWK extracts records (= stanzas, between which an empty line is inserted) from the corpus file under operation, substitutes rhymes + attached symbols (e.g., “taleXXGS0:”) for group arrays (**A,B,C,...**) field by field (\$1~\$n), and outputs them with their attributive information (line numbers, corpus file name, etc.) array by array into work file/s. Reading in the second script (**SEARCHTG.AWK**) and the work file/s, after accepting the user’s input of a search string for etymo-vocalic value (e.g., “GL0:”), GAWK collects lines that include relevant rhyme groups and outputs them, with judgements whether they are self-rhymes, into a single result file.



```
% gawk-f build.awk 2 srbevis.cps BUILDING WORK FILE/S ...
SRBEVIS. CPS :0000400_0001_A 02 taleXXGS0:[01]ni3tingaleXXGS0:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0000400_0003_B 02 singeXXASO:[01]lesingXXASO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0000400_0004_C 02 rounneXXELO:[01]HamtounneXXELO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0001100_0007_A 02 gadreXXDSO:[01]fadreXXDSO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0001800_0013_A 02 telleXXCSO:[01]felleXXCSO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0001800_0015_B 02 strongXXGSO-FSO:[01]longXXGSO-FSO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0002500_0019_A 02 eldexXISO=CSO:[01]weldeXXISO=CSO:[02]
SRBEVIS. CPS :0002500_0021_B 02 takeXXGS2:[01]for-sakeXXGS0:[02]

% gawk-f searchtg.awk srbevis.md2 RETRIEVING THE SEARCH RESULT/S ...
The target string is / GL0: /
JUDGEMENT FILE :LINE NUMBER STARTPOINT NO.
-----
SELF-RHYME SRBEVIS.CPS :00130 00_0109_A 02 gothXXGL0:[01]worthXXGL0:[02]
SELF-RHYME SRBEVIS.CPS :00144 00_0124_C 02 anonXXGL0:[01]gonXXGL0:[02]
OTHERS-FIRST SRBEVIS.CPS :00172 00_0147_B 02 doXXFLO:[01] soXXGL0:[02]
TARGET-FIRST SRBEVIS.CPS :00214 00_0184_C 02 borXXGL0:[01] forXXFSO:[02]
SELF-RHYME SRBEVIS.CPS :00326 00_0280_C 02 gonXXGL0:[01] anonXXGL0:[02]
```

Figure 3: Processing the Corpus into Work File/s and Retrieving Specific Rhymes

The present author took this series of steps to retrieve rhymes from the object material of this article: *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. After briefly introducing traditional comments on the poet’s dialect, he shall discuss them with the collected data.

### 3. The Edition and the Traditional Views on the Author's Dialect

The story *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (henceforth *Beues*) is available in two edited texts in Kölbing (1885-94). The date of its translation from Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* into the ME original is commonly set between 1250 and 1300 (Weiss 1971: 71; Dunn 1967: 25). Editing source materials (5 manuscripts and 2 printed texts) belonging to the same genealogy, Kölbing assumes two entirely different branches, and he therefore works out two editions in parallel in the series of EETS books. Among the materials he regards Auchinlek Manuscript as the least corrupt one of all, thinking it was copied before 1327 (see his stemma and resolution in xxxviii). Thus, all his comments on the author's dialect (xiii-xxi) are founded on the rhyme data of the very manuscript. After having juxtaposed the dialectal features in phonology and inflections, the editor concludes his efforts of localisation: "I think *Sir Beues* must have been composed on the borders of the western and the eastern parts of South England, perhaps in the neighbourhood of Southampton". This very judgement has formed the traditional view as to its dialect, reflected in manuals of English literature (Dunn 1967: 25).

However, while the present author was encoding the text into an electronic corpus, he found in its rhymes some quite important characteristics pointing to completely different localities, characteristics many of which are neglected or, at best, not seriously mentioned in the edition. The number of such instances is fairly large, and ample investigation with the same text is required to make the matters clear. In the following section, the dialectal features observed in the collected rhymes are described, especially of non-South-Western dialects.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The results of the rhyme investigation are classified in the undermentioned subsections, and accordingly we discuss non-South-Western dialectal features, to which the editor seems to pay little attention in his notes.

#### 4.1 OE $\bar{a}$ > ME /a(z)/

*Beues* shows two Northern features in its rhymes, one of which appears at ll.781-2:

'Aris!' queth Beues, 'corsede gast,	(< OE <i>gāst</i> )
And ? 3em me bataile wel in hast!'	(< OF <i>hast</i> )



[‘Arise!’ said Beues, ‘cursed GHOST, / and give me a battle well in HASTE!’]



Figure 4: Nothem English Area

This rhyme indicates the phonological form of /gaɜst/ in ME. The dialectal area where the shift OE *ā* > ME /ɔɜ/ (> RP /əʊ/) did not occur corresponds to the north of the Humber, where stem vowels like /jɛ/ appears in Modern English dialects (Jordan 1974: § 44; Wright 1905: § 121). The text contains three more rhymes of the kind: ll.3819-20 *prawe* : *y-slawe* (< OE *prāwan* THROW : OE *slāgen* SLAIN); ll.4049-50 *wat* : *stat* (< OE *wāt* KNOW : OF *stat* STATE);

ll.4443-4 *prawe* : *islawe* (< OE *prāg* TIME : OE *slāgen* SLAIN). Actually, this feature alone does not make a decisive mark of Northern ME, as some scholars note these instances as concessions to rhyme (Zettl 1935: cxix, for the West Midland dialect; Geist 1948: 176, for the early London dialect). *Sir Ferumbras*, quite probably a South-Western material, also seems to show this type of rhyme (Ikegami 1997: 17). However, this feature makes much more sense when it is mentioned with the one in the next subsection.

#### 4.2 Open Syllable Lengthening of High Vowels (especially OE *u* > ME /oɜ/)

Another Northern or North Midland feature therein is open syllable lengthening of high vowels, a typical example of which is the following (ll.779-80):

The bor hadde slawe in the wode, (< OE *wudu*)

Ieten here flesch & dronke her blode. (< OE *blōd*)

[The boar had slain in the WOOD, / eaten their flesh and drunk their BLOOD.]

Other rhyme examples of this high vowel OS� are: ll.3381-2 *Rome* : *icome* (< OE *Rōm* ROME : OE *cumen* COME [pp.]); ll.3411-2 *come* : *benome* (< OE *cumen* COME [pp.] : OE *benōmon* TOOK [pt.pl.]); ll.1293-4 *ride* : *wede* (OE *riden* RIDDEN : OE

*wēd/wēd* CLOTHES). This phenomenon is known to be strictly of Northern origin, and spread around North Midlands only after *circa* 1350 (Jordan 1974: §§ 26,36,38). *Pearl*, whose dialect is judged as that of West Midlands, also contains this sort of rhyme, about which Sisam (1921: 227) argues in his editorial note: “Such rimes occur occasionally in Northern texts of the fourteen century – never in the South”. Chaucer and Gower, who composed poems in the late 14th century, indeed never made such a concession, as far as the *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis* are accessed.<sup>4)</sup> The situations of the above two etymological vowels (OE *ā* & *u*) are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: OE *ā* and *u* in ME — Numeric Data related to Dialectal Features

RHYME TYPE	<i>Beues</i> (ll.4,620)	<i>CT</i> (ll.17,410)	<i>CA</i> (ll.33,444)	COMMENT ON DIALECT
OE <i>ā</i> & OE <i>ā</i>	158	481	942	(self-rhymes)
OE <i>ā</i> & OE <i>ō</i> /OF <i>o</i>	27	66	179	Southern
OE <i>ā</i> & OE <i>o</i>	57	48	108	Southern
OE <i>ā</i> & ME /a(ɪ)/	5	1	0	Northern
OE <i>u</i> & OE <i>u</i>	18	45	160	(self-rhymes)
OE <i>u</i> & OE <i>ō</i>	3	0	0	Northern

Although the rhymes that indicate these dialectal influences are relatively few, they are particularly striking, since these results are far from probable, for the speech community of the linguistic features is about 170 miles away from Southampton. The distance should be enormous particularly when travelling and migration were still accompanied with much danger and inconvenience.

#### 4.3 OE *æ* (and *ea* by Fracture) > ME /e/

As the normal development of OE *æ/ea*, it is safely assumed that it stepped into the phoneme /a/ in ME, or /aː/ afterwards by various lengthening. Thus, as to the

<sup>4)</sup> The rhymes in the two works by Chaucer and Gower may require some explanation. The only one occurrence of OE/ON *ālā* rhyming at ME /a(ɪ)/ appears in *CT* at l 4087-8 (*Reeve's Tale*), where two clerks are found speaking in Northern dialect:

By Goddès herte, he sal nat scape us bathe! (< OE *bā* *pā*)

Why ne had thou pit the capul in the lathe? (< ON *hlaða*)

[Definitely he shall not escape from us BOTH! / Why hadn't you put the horse in the BARN?] As to rhyme examples of words containing OE *i* and OE *ē*, there are two (once for each): *CA* Bk.7 ll.957-8 *weke* : *eke* (< OE *wicu* *WEEK* : OE *ēac/ēc* ALSO); *CT* VII ll.857-8 *leere* : *cleere* (< OE *lira* *FLESH* [in Bosworth & Toller (1898); OE *lira* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*] : OF *cler* *CLEAR*). For the tagged electronic corpora of *CA* and *CT*, see Endo (1999: 15-6).

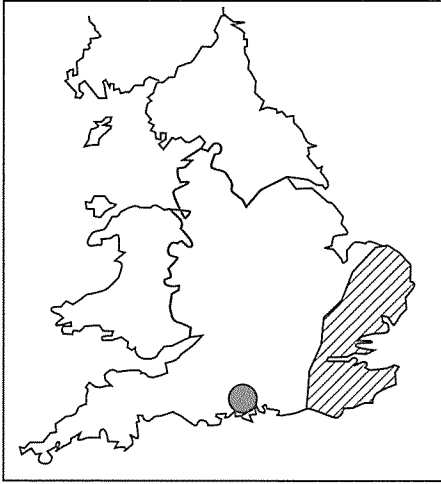


- Whether these rhymes verify the feature of West Midlands or of Kent, Southampton is not very near to these areas, and what Kölbing asserts in his editorial notes is rather doubtful on this point, too.

This phonological shift is exemplified in the following rhyme (ll.2073-4):

[And he asked them in that STEAD, / What they all there DID.]

<sup>6)</sup> Here OE  $\bar{y}$  comes out as ME /eː/ or /e/; otherwise, it cannot rhyme with a word having OE  $\alpha/ea$ . This Eastern feature is much explicated in Subsection 4.4.

Figure 6: OE *y/ȳ* > ME /e/, /e:/'

were the doors to the Continent and therefore socially influential (the Capital London also forms part of the dialectal territory), this sort of pronunciation seems to have been accepted more widely than the area of its actual speech community (Figure 6). Provided that such phonological variants would be a useful device for poets to compose rhymes (Jordan 1974: § 40), the area of its acceptance may well be extended further north and west. Other examples are listed up in the following<sup>7)</sup>:

- ll.351,4 *stede* : *dede* (< OE *stede* STEAD : OE *dyde* DID)
- ll.685-6 *bren* : *sen* (< ON *bryn* EYE-BROWS : OE *sēon* SEE)
- ll.1407-8 *scheue* : *heue* (< OE *scēofan* THRUST : OE *hȳf* HIVE)
- ll.1615-6 *fest* : *toberst* (< OE *fȳst* FIST : OE *tōbræst* BURST[pt.sg.])
- ll.1807-8 *stede* : *dede* (< OE *stede* STEAD : OE *dyde* DID)
- ll.1871-2 *fest* : *prest* (< OE *fȳst* FIST : OE *prēost* PRIEST)
- ll.2631-2 *stede* : *dede* (< OE *stede* STEAD : OE *dyde* DID)
- ll.2667-8 *stede* : *pride* (< OE *stēda* STEED : OE *prȳde/prȳte* PRIDE)
- ll.3213-4 *dede* : *stede* (OE *dyde* DID : OE *stede* STEAD)
- ll.4165-6 *ibrent* : *dent* (< ON *brenna* BURN : OE *dynt* DINT)
- ll.4383-4 *dent* : *pauiment* (< OE *dynt* DINT : OF *pavement* PAVEMENT)
- ll.4505-6 *veraiment* : *dent* (< OF *veraiement* TRULY : OE *dynt* DINT)
- ll.4515-6 *pauiment* : *dent* (< OF *pavement* PAVEMENT : OE *dynt* DINT)

Some of these lexical items that indicate the shift OE *y/ȳ* > ME /e(:)/ also appear in rhymes with OE *i* words, as in ll.1753-4 *dintes* : *flintes* (< OE *dynt* DINT : OE *flint*

<sup>7)</sup> Other than these, there are instances of *terne* (< OE *tyrnan* TURN) rhyming with *terne* (< OE *georne* EAGERLY), *derne* (< OE *diernelderne* SECRET), and so on. They are ignored in this paper because of its seemingly unstable vocalic value before the Coda /t/ (Dobson 1968: §§ 75,213; suggestions are contributed also by Professor Masa T. Ikegami in personal communication).

#### 4.5 OE *æg* (? > late WS *ǣ*) > ME /e ɜː/

Unlike the court poets' works, *Beues* exhibits the former dialectal reflex much more frequently. What it differs from *Ministry and Passion* is that we can observe the

consequent vocalic slots not only as /eɪ/ but also /eɪ̃/. Prins (1959: 420-1) comments this kind of rhyme somehow as an incorrect one. Yet, such instances are indeed noticed in *Beues*, as in the list below (asterisks are prefixed to the occurrences that attest OE æg > ME /eɪ̃/ like the sample couplet above; all the others point to long vowels regardless of the vocalic quality):<sup>8)</sup>

- ll.397-8 *sede* : *rede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādan/rēdan* ADVISE)
- ll.433-4 *rede* : *sede* (< OE *rādan/rēdan* REDE[vb.] : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.448-9 *grede* : *sede* (< OE *grādan* CRY : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.1145-6 *dede* : *misede* (< OE *dādl/dēd* DEED : OE *-sægd* SAID[pp.])
- ll.1169-70 *wede* : *sede* (< OE *wād/wēd* CLOTHES : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- \* ll.1193-4 *misede* : *mede* (< OE *-sægd* SAID[pp.] : OE *mēd* MEED)
- ll.1493-4 *lede* : *sede* (< OE *lādan* LEAD[vb.] : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.1627-8 *ded* : *ised* (< OE *dēad* DEAD : OE *sægd* SAID[pp.])
- \* ll.1937-8 *stede* : *sede* (< OE *stēda* STEED : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.1949-50 *mede* : *sede* (< OE *mādl/mēd* MEADOW : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- \* ll.2025-6 *stede* : *leide* (< OE *stēda* STEED : OE *lægd* LAID[pt.])
- ll.2151-2 *grede* : *sede* (< OE *grādan* CRY : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.2171-2 *sede* : *lede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *lādan* LEAD[vb.])
- ll.2209-10 *sede* : *rede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādan/rēdan* ADVISE)
- ll.2339-40 *saide* : *reed* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādl/rēd* ADVICE)
- ll.2911-2 *sede* : *rede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādan/rēdan* ADVISE)
- ll.2941-2 *sede* : *rede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādan/rēdan* ADVISE)
- ll.2947-8 *sede* : *drede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *drādan/drēdan* DREAD[vb.])
- ll.2957-8 *sede* : *rede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *rādan/rēdan* ADVISE)
- ll.3039-40 *sede* : *drede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *drādan/drēdan* DREAD[vb.])
- ll.3201-2 *dede* : *sede* (< OE *dādl/dēd* DEED : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- ll.3369-70 *lede* : *sede* (< OE *lādan* LEAD[vb.] : OE *sægde* SAID[pt.])
- \* ll.3643-4 *seth* : *teth* (< OE *sægþ* SAYS : OE *tēþ* TEETH)

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<sup>8)</sup> In *Beues* some words appear which prove to have both diphthongal (/ai/) and lengthened (/eɪ̃/ or /eɪ̃/) stems, the former of which is proved by their rhyming with such ME loans as *apaide* (< OF *apayer* SATISFY). The diphthongal forms are considered to have been used much more broadly (Hogg 1992: 290-1), and are not very useful for dialect localisation. This article concentrates on the lengthened forms for this reason.

- ll.3727-8 *sede* : *lede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *lædan* LEAD[vb.])
- \* ll.3737-8 *sede* : *mede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *mēd* MEED[sb.])
- ll.4125-6 *sede* : *ferede* (< OE *sægde* SAID[pt.] : OE *gefērrādan* FELLOWSHIP)
- \* ll.4485-6 *teth* : *seth* (< OE *tēþ* TEETH : OE *sægþ* SAYS)

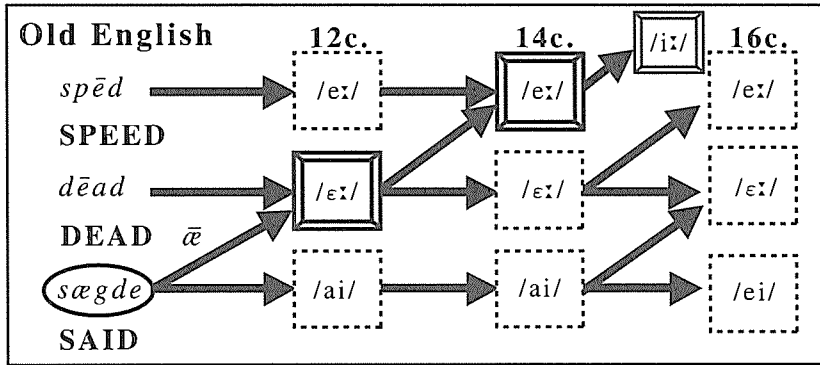


Figure 7: OE *æg*(? > West Saxon *ǣ*) > ME /eɪ/ — A Schematic View

The two flows of shift happening to OE *æg* + a dental/alveolar obstruent are summarised in Figure 7. In order to find out where this pronunciation was heard, one could investigate the regional dialect/s in which words like SAID are today pronounced with /i:/ (< ME /eɪ/ through the Great Vowel Shift). According to Wright (1905: § 48), South Cheshire and its surrounding areas are the most likely, where MAID (< OE *mægden*) is pronounced as /mi: d/ at the beginning of the 20th century).<sup>9)</sup>

Figure 8 presents a rough sketch of the speech area in late Modern English. The reader may wonder why the remains of the OE lengthened stem are restricted to such a place as is far-off from the original West Saxon territory. Yet, thinking that ME /eɪ/ underwent the Great Vowel Shift in whole England virtually without exception, the ME variant reflected in *Beues* should appear in present-day dialect/s as /i:/, and the possible place for the experience in question seems to be fairly limited.

Again, the place is rather too far from Southampton, and evidently Kölbing did not pay much respect to this type of rhyme in his localisation, possibly because he was not aware of the speciality of the shift OE *æg* > ME /eɪ/. It is highly probable that he discounted this type of rhymes in his localisation of the author's language. Even the

<sup>9)</sup> Words containing /i:/ for OE *æg* before *l*, like TAIL and NAIL (< OE *tægl*, *nægl*) show a wider range of area in their occurrence (South-East Yorkshire and Norfolk as well as Central Midlands) according to Wright (1905: §48). This article excludes these data, for rhymes in *Beues* do not exhibit /eɪ/ or /eɪ/ for OE *æg* before *l*.



research literature published in the 20th century, including Wright and Wright (1928: § 106) and Jordan (1974: § 191), does not contain meaningful information and/or explanation about this somehow peculiar evolution. Ikegami (1997: 17 n.15) refers to a similar rhyme *sede* : *spede* (< OE *sægde* : OE *spēd*) in *Sir Ferumbras*, but without justifying comments on the special raising either.

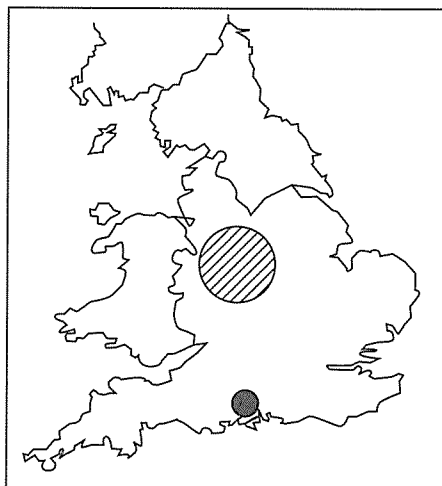


Figure 8: OE *æg* > Mod. E. /i:/

## 5. Overall Evaluation and Conclusion

This paper has examined five phonological features observable in rhymes of *Beues*. In his investigation of rhymes, Kölbing (1885-94: xiii-xxi) examines inflection as well as phonology, and sometimes succeeds in pinpointing the dialect to a significant degree. For instance, he takes up the rhyme ll.849-50 *sles* : *pes* (< OE *slēap* [pr.pl.] SLAY : OF *pes* PEACE). This -s inflection for present plural is confined to texts produced in West Midland ME.

Comments are given hereunder to those phonological features which the editor thinks to be distinctive of South-Western dialects: (1) rhymes like ll.757-8 *honti* : *ronsi* (< OE *huntian* HUNT : OF *ronci*<*roncin* HORSE) in *Beues* prove the ME infinitive ending -i of those which belong to OE Class 2 weak verbs, a characteristic which has traditionally been observed as typical to South-Western ME; on the other hand, using local documents in the 13th century as her materials, Serjeantson (1927: 197-8) finds this suffix also in Central West Midlands (Hereford and Worcester), implying that it was not unnatural to hear it those days in West Midland counties including Cheshire (further north) and therefore that it is not a decisive feature pointing to South-Western ME. (2) *Beues* contains 10 instances of *fale* (< OE *feala* MANY) rhyming with *tale* (< OE *talū* TALE), *sale* (< ON *sala* SALE), etc. This form has traditionally been taken to be distinctive of the South-Western dialect, while *fele* (< OE *fela* MANY) is widely distributed around Midlands. The form *fale* is indeed characteristic of South-Western, especially around Gloucester (McIntosh *et al.* 1986: 524 [No.984]). But whether this alone can strongly support the editor's hypothesis seems still open to suspicion, not to

mention that Gloucester and Southampton are hardly close to each other.

All other points of his description are, strictly speaking, not quite helpful in specifying the author's dialect. The features proposed or emphasised in the previous section contribute geographically specific information about the composer, with which we would be able to localise the author's dialect roughly to Derbyshire. When the editor was working out the compilation of this text, academic resources on (Middle) English dialectology were still quite limited in comparison with those available today. Hopefully, his

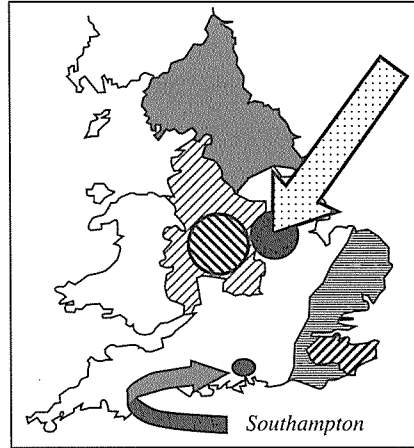


Figure 9: Relocalisation Result

comments produced in the 19th century will be further reconsidered from now on and the fruit of present-day accomplishments in dialectology be precisely reflected in manuals of the English language and literature.

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